

INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED

AT THE OPENING OF

NEWARK COLLEGE,

BY

PROFESSOR JOHN HOLMES AGNEW.

NEWARK, DELAWARE, MAY 8, 1834.

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ADDRESS.

Few events have transpired in the history of Delaware, more interesting than the foundation of Newark College, within its own limits. True, its soldiers bore a noble part in the mighty achievements of that day, which "tried men's souls." True, the magnanimous Washington, and the gallant La Fayette both fought bravely on the banks of its Brandywine, and, not far from this spot, met the forces of Sir William Howe, on his march to Philadelphia.

To-day, however, we wage no war, we wield no sword: but, on the same ground, now rescued from every foreign foe, and populated by a respectable community, under benign and wholesome laws, we are pacifically assembled to found an Institution, which may issue in the richest blessings to this State, and confer pure joys upon a multitude of immortal minds.

The event is important, because of the influence which it must necessarily exert on the interests of this commonwealth. It is, indeed, but the sowing of a seed now, but the day, we trust, is not far distant, when, by fostering care, and genial nurture, it shall have become a tree overshadowing the land, and scattering around its nutritious and wholesome fruits.

Here will young men be educated for the business of life, and go out to act their part on the theatre of existence, either imbued with principles which will qualify them for marring the peace and prosperity of this republican government, or with such as will fit them for strengthening its pillars, and beautifying its gates with enduring memorials of its glory.

On the principles which shall prevail in the discipline of this College, and the plans of instruction which shall be adopted

by its Board of Trustees, much will depend. It may be withered in the bud by the frosts of neglect, or wilted by the scorching heat of passionate excitement. It may have thrust within its precincts, to guide its sons, those who shall imbue their minds with prejudices against Christianity, and political principles subversive of our happy Union. Or it may ever call to its aid, those who love the *Bible*, and will delight to infuse its vivifying and elevating principles of action into the youthful mind, thus training up a generation of moral and useful citizens, an honor to their Alma Mater, and a rich gift to their government.

In the organization of an Institution of learning, we are naturally directed to the subject of education; and, in presenting my views briefly, I shall call your attention to *government and instruction. or external and internal discipline.*

I. *Government or external discipline.* In every community, there must be some mode of administration, some principles of order. Hence, in the earliest periods of the world's history, the chief rule was intrusted to the Patriarch. Afterward, in some instances, to limited, in others, to unlimited monarchs. In our own country, to a Legislative, Executive, and Judicial department, all originating in the will of the people, and ultimately responsible to them. This, we believe to be the most efficient, and felicitous form of administration for the mass of the population.

In the administration of a College, there are also these several branches of government—a Board of Trustees to legislate, and a Faculty elected by them, to execute law, and judge of offences. This system is presumed to be the best, not only because it is essentially conformed with the mode of national and state administration, but because experience has proved its utility.

That some discipline is requisite, will be at once apparent to every reflecting mind. To proceed without it, would be as unwise and as hopeless, as to launch a vessel loaded with valuable freight, without either rudder, helmsman, or sail, and yet calculate on its safe arrival at the destined port. It

must necessarily be the sport of winds, and the victim of the waves.

No parent would think of sending his son to reside, for several years in an Institution, or to connect himself with an Association which was conducted without any judicious organization. Much less to one established on disorganizing and mischievous principles. He expects, on the contrary, that in releasing his sons from family government, and confiding them to the officers of a College, they will be still placed under wholesome restraints, and guided onward by an affectionate hand in the paths of science and virtue. That they will be educated in folly or villiany, is neither among his desires nor calculations, but that they will so illuminate their understandings, and control their hearts, as to come forth an honour to friends, and an ornament to their country. Hence parents inquire into the character of those who legislate, judge, and execute, in any collegiate administration, before they determine to intrust their children to its care.

But, in order to a wise and profitable administration, it is necessary that all co-operate, and the several members of the body move harmoniously. The Board, the Faculty, the Students, and Parents, have each peculiar and appropriate duties to perform.

The Board is to make provision for the comfort of both Professors and Students, and remove all reasonable ground of complaint. There has, no doubt, often been error on this subject; and, by a stinted system of economy, the interests of many institutions have seriously suffered. Men who esteem their talents and acquirements, as the whole of their stock, and properly appreciate them, must not be expected to deduct from their principal, instead of adding to it. They labor in an honorable, and eminently useful calling. They qualify others for benefiting the community, and *rationaly* expect a compensation for their devoted, and often most trying and difficult employments.

Students also are, doubtless, often induced to injure property, and complain of domestic arrangements, because the latter are offensive to delicacy, and the former too far beneath the neatness and conveniences of home, to operate as any restraint, even upon those who would hesitate to deface ^{front} what bore on its ~~point~~, a character of accommodation and taste. In all these respects I am happy to be assured of the liberal and appropriate views of the Board of Newark College. The provisions already made, with those yet prospective, will tell favorably on the people, and secure their commendation.

On the Trustees is also devolved the duty of *enacting laws*. But care is requisite that there be not too much legislation. Laws should be *few and well defined*. It is thought to be a mistake, and tending to originate more crime than it prevents, to draw up a prolix and specific code, embracing every possible enormity, and descending to every trifling misdemeanor. Especially in the foundation of a College, where there are yet no bad precedents established, and much may be left to the discretion of a judicious Faculty, let the statutes embrace a few fixed principles of immutable rectitude, derived from the *best code of moral law the world ever saw,—the Bible*, and let these be unalterable, not only as the laws of the Medes and Persians, but as the righteous government of God himself. Deduced from this unerring, universally applicable, and eternal rule of right, they never need, and never ought to be changed.

^{them} Let young men understand that you receive them, and intend to govern ^{as} *moral agents*, possessed of intellect, conscience, and will, and that *you* believe them, and *they* must believe themselves to be responsible to God, to the community, and to their own persons, for the right and useful exercise of these powers. Let them see that you recognize in them, an ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and a high moral sense, which enlightened by the Christian principles of this Christian people, will deter them under

ordinary circumstances, from the commission of indecorous and disorderly acts, and induce the cultivation of *whatever things are just, true, honest, lovely, and of good report*. Let every law, therefore, be founded on that evangelical sense of morality, which in his calmer moments, at least, will speak powerfully in the bosom of every student, in its favor. 50

The Faculty also have an important part to perform in the government of the College. They are the immediate conservators of its weal. To them, parents have intrusted their most precious deposits. They receive the laws from the proper authority, and obligate themselves faithfully to execute, and impartially to judge: and therefore act, under accumulated responsibilities. Of course, very much will depend on them for the efficiency and utility of the institution.

And why should not a College be as peaceful and happy a place as home? Why should it not be a large family, associated on principles of love and order? Why should not those who go there for education, regard their instructors rather as friends than enemies? Why should they not confide in them as guides, and look up to them as parents? That state of repellent feeling which exists between students and professors, may be attributed, in a great degree, to the modes of government pursued. There has been too much of *aristocratical distance* on the part of the governors, for our republican and independent feelings—too much standing off in separate corporation—too much affected superiority and despotic dictation. Hence students lose much of the benefit of private, friendly counsel, cherish a debasing cowardice *in the presence of* their instructors, and *out of it*, a bullying independence, which must show itself in mischievous plots and manly resistance to rightful, but misused authority.

A *dignified authority*, securing proper respect, while it awakens *love*, is, in my humble opinion, much better adapted to insure both good order and good education. The young man, who only *fears* and *dislikes*, may throw arrows, and delight to inflict secret wounds, but he who *loves*, cannot.

Our care, therefore, shall be to avoid compulsion, and ply the oar of persuasion—to assume the responsibility and endeavour to fulfil the duties of parents. When offences occur, or any indiscretions not particularly specified, we shall appeal to the young man's own good sense and enlightened conscience, affectionately admonish him of his personal and social danger, and induce him to change his course from his own sober convictions: and then may we hope for perseverance in the way of order and virtue. When, however, laws are wantonly violated, the penalty will be impartially inflicted, unawed by *frown*, and uncourted by *favor*. Firm, decided, and consistent we must be, rigid and cruel, we need not. Thus do we cherish the hope of meeting the wishes of the Board, securing the patronage of the community, and gaining the confidence and esteem of our charge.

However paradoxical it may appear, *students* also have a part to bear in the government of the College. Although distinctively they are the *governed*, yet, like the loving wife, who controls her husband by the cords of devoted affection, may they *govern* their *governors*. Let them ever maintain a mild, tender, submissive course of conduct; let them put away all tumultuous thoughts and rude action; let them curb the reins of passion, and put a bit into the mouth of obstinacy, and they will find their professors disposed to consult only their comfort and usefulness, making no unnecessary demands or hard exactions. Let each one inscribe ORDER, on his mind, his heart, his body; let him read it wherever he goes, and ~~and~~ carry it out into all his relations; let this principle operate in the privacy of his own room, in the prayer-hall, at the table, in the recitation-room, the campus, the street—towards the trustees, faculty, fellow students, steward, citizens and parents, and we shall have no need of the strong arm of law, no occasion of breaking in upon their joyous number, by unpleasant censures, suspensions, dismissions or expulsions. Let every student cherish a high and noble independence; not that which will set itself up in opposition to wholesome law, but that

which will boldly retreat from the toils of temptation, and say to the human tempter, though a friend, away, with thee! The only true independence, is that which can walk alone, if need be, in the paths of rectitude, frown upon *popular* errors and vices, and say to Virtue, "Thou art my friend although all else forsake me."

They are apt to think themselves capable of noble daring, who can wield well a club, boldly assail the precincts of rectitude, and incite a huzza by some wanton act of folly, or criminality. But, oh! how little they look in the eye of Reflection, of Virtue, of God!

Condescend not to *little* things. Aim at the *great*. Cultivate *moral courage*, *virtuous* independence—not that morbid, sickly sort, which erects for itself, a loose law of honor, laughs at rigid virtue, and shouts a triumph, when wholesome laws are set at nought, and rightful authority defied.

When Mischief assails thee, tread the vile reptile under thy feet. When wayward Folly comes laughing about thee, and puts on a coaxing smile, and points thee to her numerous and joyous devotees, stand up in the dignity of thy nature, and say, "Get thee behind me, Folly! And when Fun with noisy boots comes trudging up to woo thee, tell him, "I know thee of old, Fun, and fear to follow in thy wake."

Parents also are not irresponsible for the discipline of a College, to which they send their sons. They have a part to perform at home, in communicating appropriate precepts, and exhibiting becoming examples. If their sons are unaccustomed to restraint, and have never been taught cheerful obedience, and ready submission there, they must not be surprised, if, in College they manifest the same temper; introduce disorder within its walls, and bring down disgraceful penalties upon themselves. They have much also to do for them while in the institution, by avoiding extreme indulgence, and extreme rigidity, and by constantly employing their powerful parental influence in the inculcation of correct principles of action. That parent who should do otherwise, and encourage his son in lordly views of his own dignity, and in-

dependence of authority, would strike a fatal blow at the reputation and usefulness of the son of his bosom, and plant a thorn in his own pillow.

In cases of censure and inflicted penalty, let every parent regard it as a sacred duty, to uphold the decisions of the Faculty, even though they fall heavily on himself, until he has the most indubitable evidence of wrong. Let him take it for granted, when he sends his son, that he is placing him under the government and tuition of men, who will be impartial and honest, and only enforce the rigor of the law when and where the interests of the College and of the offending student himself shall require it.

With such a co-operation of parts, such a harmonious combination of the elements of government, we may confidently anticipate the prosperity of our institution, and lay to-day, the foundation of a temple of Science, which shall sustain a noble, magnificent, and enduring superstructure.

II. *Instruction or internal discipline.* What I intend to say on this common-place topic, will embrace *moral, intellectual, and physical training.*

Moral culture ought certainly to be prominent in any judicious system of education, although too often placed in the back ground, and sometimes even entirely excluded. By moral culture is meant the proper direction of the affections and will, and the cultivation of a tender conscience, sensitive to the touch of pollution. Of what avail will be a Herculean might of muscle, or an Aristotelian profundity of mind if the heart be left without the purifying influences of moral truth? You may make a *giant*, both in body and mind, but if you let him loose on the community, destitute of appropriate dispositions, he will go forth only to destroy, and wage a war of extermination against whatever of loveliness obstructs his path. And soon you will be convinced that he had better be chained:

Physical and mental powers cultivated to the exclusion of the moral, distort the soul, and make a monster out of a man. Look at Byron, with his splendid genius and cultivat-

ed intellect, but without controlling benevolent affections! What good did he accomplish for the world? Where are the fruits of his genius, the rewards of his toil? You must look for them, not in the circles of virtuous and useful society, but in those of the vicious, and debauched. And Bolingbroke, and Voltaire, and a host of others, of similar character; have these accomplished much that is praiseworthy, and tending to the melioration of man's condition, and the cement of society's bonds? Ah no! The main-spring of regular and profitable movement in the human structure, was, in them, out of order, and hence the products were neither beneficial, nor salutary.

Knowledge is undoubtedly power; but it is power that may be abused. It may wield a mighty lever, but it may use it in a machinery, and apply it to a purpose, which shall send forth bolts of death upon multitudes of immortal minds.

You may educate a man's intellect, leaving his affections unsanctified by purifying principles, and in whatever station you place him, you have no security that he will operate usefully. If you send such a man into the pulpit, the medical profession, the bar, the legislature, the governmental, or presidential chair, you have no assurance that he will manage either your affairs, or those of the state, or nation, with discretion, and not with base manœuvre.

While, therefore, we shall endeavour to improve to the utmost, the physical and intellectual powers of those intrusted to our care, we shall not forget that these, in themselves, are questionable blessings, equally adapted to dishonor and to honor, to depress and defame, as to elevate and ennoble; but that when cultivated, ~~and~~ in conjunction with the moral powers, they become sources of lasting good to their possessor, and means of extensive usefulness to the community in which he moves.

Intellectual education, or the training of the understanding, reason, imagination, memory, &c., those powers, which are often denominated mental, in distinction from the moral, is necessarily a principal part of collegiate instruction. Deem-

ing it unnecessary, before this audience, to descant on the propriety and utility of intellectual cultivation, I shall briefly advert to a few principles on this subject, which shall regulate our course.

We shall endeavour to ascertain the natural talents of every student, and his predominant powers of mind, and regulate his pursuits accordingly. All are not similarly endowed, and cannot, therefore, be expected to make equal progress in all things. Some display more of the imaginative, inventive, and suggestive tendencies. Others, of the profound, abstractive, and reasoning. These different classes will not, of course, excel in the same departments.

Yet, perhaps, they ought rather to be urged to direct their energies principally to those studies of a nature opposite to the predominant character of their minds, in order to secure a symmetrical, or proportional growth of the several faculties. This, it is believed, is the most beneficial training; and not that which strains a single power to the utmost, and leaves the rest to sink into comparative or total inaction. The tree is not most beautiful, when a single limb or two, on one side of the trunk, have been carefully pruned, and cultivated, and the remainder either lopped off, or left to the exuberance and wildness of a natural growth. Nor does the lion carry himself with most majesty, when shorn of his mane, however fierce his countenance, or mighty the strength of his paw.

But while there will be variety, and all incorporated in the course of study that is usual in the most advanced Colleges, our design is, not so much to store the memory with mere knowledge, and fit the man for ready and flippant discourse in the social circle, but to place facts before him for the purpose of eliciting his own reflections, and calling into action his personal energies. To think, and not to make *memoriter* recitations, ought to be the great objects of the student, and to induce it the aim of the professor.

A young man may recite the whole of Euclid, and go through a course of classical studies, and be familiar with

the facts of history, and yet have made little valuable improvement of mind, because he may never have learned to reason, and investigate for himself, and must therefore always be a retailer of other men's thoughts, and never feel the independence of him, whose own well trained thinking powers are a never failing source of gratification and improvement.

Long recitations, therefore, will never be required, or received; because more regard will be paid to the quality, than the quantity, and on all subjects, the student will be required to make his own reflections, to analyze, point out the connections of the subject of study, the beauties or faults of its plan and illustrations, the propriety of its metaphors, and the force and utility of its ideas. No ode of Horace, for example or eclogue of Virgil, will be read without requiring as part of the recitation, an analysis of the whole, an explanation of the appropriateness and beauty of the allusions, a brief biography of the personages introduced, and an opinion of the correctness of its sentiments, and the propriety of its expressions.

Thus although the student may not have read as many pages as otherwise, he will have thought more, acquired more valuable information, qualified himself better for future investigations, and laid a firmer foundation for usefulness in his generation.

But, let it be remembered, that if you send us base metal, we do not promise, and you must not expect, genuine coin. We have no machinery for converting blockheads into philosophers, or dunces into geniuses. We do not pretend to take from you copper, and refine it into gold, nor brittle sandstone and polish it into diamond. We only engage, when we receive proper materials, to do our utmost to return them to you moulded into the best shape, and fitted for purposes of utility. And as usefulness, not glitter and show, ought to be the grand object of every system of education and government, if we attain this end, and send out

our young men qualified to act a useful part on the stage of life, we shall have our reward.

But to educate the mind and heart, and leave the body to wither away to inaction, would be no more wise than to manufacture a beautifully polished sword, and then leave it to rust, for want of a scabbard—or to finish the delicate internal structure of a watch, and then refuse to provide for it a case. *Physical training*, therefore, is all important—so important have some felt it to be, that in a few of our Colleges, a system of manual labor constitutes part of the plan, and every student is required to labor from two to three hours a day, as a means of invigorating both body and mind, and thus fitting him for more severe and protracted exertion. But whether this course be adopted or not, young men must be taught that it is no *waste* of time to devote a few hours daily to some bodily exercise, but a profitable improvement of it, adapting them to more vigorous mental exercises, and preparing them for a more protracted existence, and consequently, more years of useful action. The world is beginning to be alarmed at the stunted growth, pale visage, dyspeptic languor, feeble pace, and early death of her scholars. She demands of them more attention to physical or corporeal education. It is right. There is manifestly a fault here. Instructors have regarded it too little, and pupils perhaps less. There must be reform on this subject. Young men ought to be taught that they owe it to themselves, to their parents, teachers, and the community, to be more careful of their bodies; and must be made to feel also that they will be richly rewarded for all their care. There is real economy, and gain of mental acquisition, in bestowing time and attention on the physical system. It is so intimately related to the spiritual being within it, which directs its movements, that if it be impaired, the other sensibly sympathizes. You cannot debilitate your body, and throw over it a sickly sensitiveness without proportionably cramping the operations of your mind: and you cannot invigorate your physical, without

augmenting the capacity of your mental faculties. How often is the poor dyspeptic, blessed perhaps with a mighty intellect, obliged to stay its operations, because the worn out frame will not sustain them, because they send out pains and distresses into its every nerve, and lodge an aching vertigo in the citadel of thought—Oh ! how he longs for more vigor of body, more strength and tenacity of brain ! But it is all too late ! The day is gone by, and the night has come.

But is it "*hard study*," that thus rudely lays the axe at the root of verdurous hopes—thus early wastes the sap of life ? Ah ! no. Too many have thus deluded themselves and others, and won, perhaps an unmerited wreath for their brow. It is not *severe* study, but *injudiciously protracted* study, whether hard or not, without regard to regimen and diet, or food, sleep, and exercise, which has dug so many graves, and blasted so many bright anticipations, and called forth so many sighs and tears.

If young men will only be a little cautious about food, in regard to time, quality, and quantity—will only be regular and moderate in sleep, and faithful in giving daily and proportionate exercise to the muscles, they may labor as hardly, and investigate as deeply, and think as profoundly, as they please, and yet retain health.

Look at the *school-boy*—He often applies himself as closely, and studies as severely, in proportion to the ability of his yet juvenile powers, as the more advanced pupil of a College, but the bloom still reddens his cheeks, gladsome health sparkles in his lively eyes, and vigor characterizes his movements. And wherefore ? Because he still sports upon the green, in jumping, running in the race, tossing the ball, rolling the hoop, kicking the bladder, and giving full play to every muscle of the body. Thus he throws off the deleterious humors, and secures a healthful, regular digestion. But when the *same boy* becomes a student of College, surrounded by books, and opens his eyes upon extensive fields of literature, he gives up the care of his body, lays aside muscular culture, and devotes himself exclusively to mental improve-

ment. And forgetting that digestion is in proportion to activity—that an inert, sluggish system will not take up so much aliment for diffusion, as one possessing its original stamina, he makes no abatement in the quantity of his food; but throws into the laboratory more than can be digested, burdens the stomach, debilitates the nerves, adulterates the blood, and sows the seeds of speedy decay and early dissolution. Let every young man, then, who would graduate with a vigorous body, and be fitted for long and laborious action, retire early to rest, rise betimes in the morning, be moderate and simple in his diet and regular in the exercise of his limbs. This course, if he have health when he enters the College, will insure him its continuance, qualify him also for a greater amount of valuable acquisitions and graduate him, fitted for the research, as the activities of life.

In conclusion, permit me to urge upon the students of this institution, a proper self-respect, an humble confidence, high aims, holy purposes, lofty daring, in the pursuit of science and virtue. Let me ask of the trustees ardent devotion to the interests of this College; and of the community, forbearance and encouragement equal only to our desert, and then, with judicious exertions on our part, we may hope to rear an institution, which shall be an honor to its founders, a blessing to its pupils and a glory to the state: and then, when we shall all be silent in the grave, generations yet unborn will look back with grateful emotion to the events of this day, and call us blessed, as the originators of so benevolent and useful an enterprise.